

Good Afternoon

On Monday, February 7, 2021 protesters converged on Huron Church Road specifically targeting the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor. The Ambassador Bridge is the busiest commercial crossing between Canada and United States and thousands of businesses rely on the border and trade coming through it. The area that surrounds the Bridge is residential and many of our west end residents are affected too as well as our daily commuters.

I am pleased to be here this morning to provide an update on the most recent situation from Huron Church Road. Within the last hour (0900hrs), there were approximately 50 to 75 vehicles in the area with approximately 100 protesters. The situation is very fluid and we are continually assessing it. Northbound traffic on Huron Church from Tecumseh Road West is blocked off, yet the Ambassador Bridge can still be accessed via Wyandotte St West. Southbound traffic is shut down and this includes the exit from the Bridge and access south of College Ave. We do have one lane open southbound on Huron Church for Emergency Vehicle access. East and westbound traffic on College Avenue and Tecumseh Road is open for vehicular traffic.

I cannot comment on specifics in regards to our operational plan, but I can tell you that our goal is to open all lanes of traffic on Huron Church Road. In order to do that, we are taking a diplomatic approach and attempting to negotiate a safe and sustainable resolution.

I realize this is an emotional time for many and urge everyone involved not to jeopardize public peace or participate in purposefully illegal events. To those engaged in the protest, we implore you to continue to speak with our officers on the ground. Impromptu road closures and walking demonstrations affected by the protesting groups will hinder emergency response and will jeopardize those who need assistance. It is essential we have first responder access to the west end.

I have heard from many business owners and citizens and I too share your concerns. Understand that the Windsor Police respects the right of Canadians to exercise their freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. However, I can assure you that the Windsor Police Service will not tolerate illegal or disorderly behavior and we will investigate any criminal acts in accordance with legislated responsibilities. Our officers will resort to the level of intervention necessary to ensure the safety of the public and to maintain peace, order and public security. The proper use of police discretion is a valid and appropriate approach to deescalating situations, this should not be confused with a lack of enforcement. Throughout the pandemic our officers have exercised this discretion when dealing with other unlawful activity relating to government mandates. Officers identified responsible parties at the scene and enforced the law by arresting or ticketing offenders when a lower risk opportunity presented itself.

Before I conclude, I would like to take a moment to thank the all members of the Windsor Police Service. As we move into a third day of protests, I am concerned about the potential impact that a further prolonged event will have on the health and wellbeing of our members. Today I will be forwarding a request to both Provincial and Federal officials looking to attain additional resources in the form of personnel and equipment.

I appreciate the assistance of all of our partners and echo his worship's sentiment that no one agency can resolve this situation alone. We rely on all levels of government to assist in resolving these protests peacefully and restoring calm to our City.